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ABSTRACT

Disadvantaged secondary school students with special reading needs can be motivated in the reading room. The school year can start with "popcorn" reading involving materials that are funny, interesting, and exciting. The teacher reads to the students or the students read silently, using materials on the students' independent rather than instructional level. Writing activities are also included and involve the writing of stories, plays, slogans, logos, bumper stickers, messages for T-shirts, epitaphs, and menus. All the writing is displayed on the bulletin boards and autographed by the author. Students' reading difficulties are diagnosed when they read aloud or when they talk in sessions such as "Bring and Brag." Rather than book reports, students engage in story reports. Fun worksheets at the beginning of the school year let the students become aware of their own listening styles. Students engage in listening through the use of filmstrips and cassettes. Another listening activity involves a visit from the vice principal for a fireside chat. Prefixes and suffixes are learned by playing Bingo, and other vocabulary words are learned by working crossword puzzles or by doing investigative work in the dictionary. Such a reading classroom provides the students with (1) a balance between teacher control and student self-direction, (2) order and clearly defined structure, (3) excitement and imaginative materials, (4) a high teacher expectation, and (5) an atmosphere where humor, hugs, and love prevail. (HOD)

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READING WITH A SPECIAL TOUCH

What can I do to get disadvantaged students with special reading needs to like to come into the reading room? All I've got is words in books, and for the most part, all the students I teach are terrified of books and words.

When my students go to Home EConomics, they can bake and eat cookies, play with small children during Child Care Month, sew a pretty sundress, or work on delicate needlepoint.

When my students go into Art, they can get their hands all squishy with clay, watch the kiln glow hot, hotter, hottest, oggle the girlie pictures in the art books or paint rainbows on the wall.

When the students go into Gym, they can run, hop, skip, jump. They can play Tether Ball, Dodge, Basketball - anykind of ball.

When they go into English, they can have boy-girl competition on the chalkboard to see who can diagram a sentence faster, they can have word relays, spelling bees and seek-and-find word games.

In science, they can blow up the teacher's desk, build a volcano, play with the skeleton in the closet, watch colored eggs hatch and learn about the birds and bees. They can watch the critters in formeldhyde age. They can do hands-on experiements.

In mathematcis, they can draw pitures using triangles, circles and squares. They can learn Chimenba and about computers.

Then there's my class - reading again - they ask. Books - notning but books all over the room. How can I inspire reluctant readers to tackle the reading process when they've been so unsuccessful for four or five years?

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Well, I've learned a trick or two in the past 45 years. First, I've learned how to communicate effectively both written and orally. I've learned how to be a business woman and turn the reading class into a reading factory. I know that I'm president of the McCool Reading Program, the students are my reading products, and you, the public, are the consumer. And I've been turning out a well-rounded good reading product. And I do it all with WORDS.

I learned in college - thanks CSU - that there are four aspects to communication: reading, writing, speaking and listening. I've learned that these are skills that can be taught in three ways: affectively, cognitvely and through psychomotor activities.

READING: When school starts each fall, we do popcorn reading. This makes for a comfortable atmosphere and lessens the fear of fat books. I read to the students; I let them read silently. At first, I don't force any oral reading. I make sure the materials we work with are on their indepdent level. Never, but never, try to teach reluctant, disadvantaged readers with materials on their instructional level - they"ll either fail or frustrate or both. I use materials that are funny, interesting and exciting. For instance, I ask them to read the Silly Sissy Story. I provide plenty of joke books and riddle books for the students. We read and learn tongue twisters - one at a time. Did you know that the hardest tongue twister in the world was: THE SIXTH SHEIK'S SHEEP IS SICK.

WRITING: We write stores, play, slogans, logs, bumper stickers, messages for Tshirts, our epitaphs, menus. We write letters to the teacher and to each other. We write with pictures for stimuli and without. We write using Mystery folders or cartoon panels. And we display all the writing on the bulletin boards autographed by the author.

SPEAKING: Much can be learned by speaking. Certainly, this includes oral reading. I can instantly diagnose a student's reading difficulties when I listen to him read aloud. I can evaluate his vocabulary and his level of concepts by listening to him talk. We have Best and Best sessions and we listen as each student speaks. We have Bring and Brag and how they love it. Each student gets a chance to shine in front of the classrom - in front of his peers. We don't have Book Reports. We have Story Reports. The slow reader loves Story Reports and is never intimidated with this kind of reading assignment.

LISTENING: Listening skills can be taugh, measured and changed. I use fun worksheets at the beginning of school to let the students become aware of their own listening styles. We use all the Newbery filmstrips and cassettes, the Shelock Holmes and the Disney classics. Twice a month the students listen to these tapes. They are not like the ones they watch and listen to in Social Studies - How Trees Grow in Outer Mongolia - no, they are all filmed from either movies or books which are highly recommended by teachers throughout the world. When the films are short, I give the students a little history lesson.

Another listening activity is when I invite the vice principal into the classrom for a fireside chat. Prior to the session, they write questions they want answered or comments they want to make on 3 x 5 cards and when the V-P gets set, they don't utter a word. They listen. Popcorn reading is also an excellent activity for getting students to ~~play~~ listen. Also reading scripts.

When the students go into their monthly slump and don't want to do much

but complain or day dream, then I proclaim a Thematic Week: all Disney classics, a Sherlock film/book/play week, Folktale week with all kinds of activities. Or maybe I'll cook a meal and make the students read and write the receipes. Or we'll have some sort of cut-and-paste activity.

So I use words to motivate the students. I keep them involved, for someone told me once that an involved student was a motivated student. I let the students make their own lesson plans once every nine week. I let them plan activities as the occasions arise, and I let them do all the work.

I use lots of humor and hugs in the reading room. I tell them to cut their hair, wash their jean jackets, use body powder, sit up straight, tie their shoes... I make the room comfortable physically and relaxed emotionally. Many students are coping with problems that would curl your toes as an adult much less a 12-13 year old.

I show a great enthusiasm for reading myself. I read constantly in the classroom; I take college textbooks there occasionally, and the students see me reading. When they work on skills and don't need me while they're working, I sit and read. Sometimes I sit at my desk and sometimes I sit on the sofa in my room. Sometimes a student will come sit by me and we'll read together.

I talk to my students about reading, the importance of education.

I use all the usual materials to teach reading skills in phonic and structural analysis, comprehension, inference, sequencing, etc. We work on vocabulary, we draw and we color. We use old catalogues, the classics, comics, newsppaers, filmstrips, crosspuzzle word puzzle books, games, machines, you name it and our reading room has it somewhere.

I read to the students - I read all kinds of material. On Halloween I turn out the lights, pull down the blackout shades, light a candle and read ghost stories. You can hear a pin drop, and heaven forbid the intercom come on or someone knock on the door.

We learn about prefix and suffixes by playing Bingo. We learn social skills by doing social reading and playing electricity. We learn vocabulry by working crossword puzzles (no seek-and-find in my room) and dictionary worksheets. We learn to read better by reaing constantly both orally and silently. We learn team work by reading scripts and popcorn reading.

When the students come into the reading room, I am often ready with words that startle: Did you know that handerkerchiefs were once round instead of square? That some fish don't have manners; they spit their enemies to death? That there is a talking elevator, that people can ski indoors, that years ago in Siam, white elephants were given palaces to live in, that before 1900 little boys often dressed like little girls. That a whispering stick was once shoved into the mouths of children who talked too much. That roads are now being made of rubber and that you can tell the temperature if you listen to the chirp of a cricket. And that in days gone by, visitors kissed everyone in the household including the cat, dog and the chickens.

I challenge with words. I use materials I find in books and magzines or that I make up myself to ~~th~~ show that words can be exciting and interesing. Do you know what a palindrome is - an idiom? Did you know there ~~was~~ 15 only one word in the dictionary that has three sets of double letters consecutively. That there is only one word in the dictionary that contains all the vowels and they are in order.

I teach that words don't have to be read from left to riht, top to bottom. We read and work Word Wheels and write conrete poetry. We even read booksand stories upside down for fun.

I use words every way I can think of and now I have some word activities for you. Then I want to close with some words of wisdom to all principals who are interested in a good reading program.

The Oklahoma Sissy

A man arrived in Arkansas driving a 2-wheeled cart which was drawn by a pair of mountain lions. The man was unkempt and beareed and wore two big six-shooters aroundhis waist and had a Bowie knife stuck in his belt. On the seat beside him rode a snarling wildcat and, for a whip, the stranger used a live rattlesnake. After he had ordered and drunk a allon of sulfuric acid, this wooly hombre was asked to tell where he came from.

"Okalhomy," he said, wiping his mouth with theback of his hand. "Things're getting so bad that all us sissies are getting out!"

Source unknown

Students with special needs, especially reading needs, can excel best in a classroom where there is a:

1. Balance between teacher-control and student self-direction.
   a. Make own lesson plans
   b. Choose own reading materials: comics, newspapers, catalogues
2. Student order
   a. Rules known and understood
3. Clearly-defined structure
   a. Lesson plans for a week on the chalkboard makes them secure
   b. papers properly filed in folders, color-coded
   c. Work expected all hour
4. Student excitement; not to be mistaken for student misbehavior
   a. Phonic bingo
   b. Popcorn reading
   c. Script reading
5. Imaginative and diversified instruction/materials
   a. Quantity isn't necessary. Do something unusual with what you have.
   b. Make skinny minnies
   c. Timed readings - repeated readings.
6. High teacher expectation
   a. An "You can do it and I expect you to."
7. Sense of control over student time and skills
   a. Materials always neatly arranged and readily available. No hunting for materials and papers and answers
   b. Placement of materials in carrells
   c. Levels available for higher instruction
8. Atmosphere where humor, hugs and love prevails

To insure a successful reading program...

I convince every student he/she can read.

I furnish them with interesting material on their independent level.

I give them some time each day to read and enjoy reading.

I use...

Color

Touch

Humor

Love

I am...

firm

warm

prepared

consistent

I can forget...

uniformity

critical remarks

term requirements

giving up

I can...

learn something from the students

WHAT A PRINCIPAL SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE READING PROGRAM

1. A BASAL READER DOES NOT A READING PROGRAM MAKE

   No basal reading series can meet the needs of all children. It is a significant part of the total instructional program but it should be supplemented and supported with other resources.

2. TEST RESULTS DON'T ALWAYS TELL THE WHOLE STORY

   Too often the success or failure of an approach is measured only by the test results at the end of the program. Development in the affective domain (positive attitudes and self-confidence) may go unrecognized for some students in over-reliance on program test results.

3. TEACHERS ARE INDIVIDUALS TOO

   The reading program should be built around the individual strengths of the teachers toward a common - teaching students how to become effective independent readers.

4. PARENTS CAN HELP

   Parents and other volunteers can be of immense assistance in and out of the classroom.

5. VISITING HELPS

   The principal should be a regular visitor to the classroom, not as a monitor, but just as an interested member of the school team.

6. ASK WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW

   It is crucial that the principal rely on the expertise of the staff members to plan an effective program.

7. MORE OF THE SAME IS NOT NECESSARILY BETTER

   Too often a supplemental program selected simply duplicates what is already being done in the regular classroom.

8. SEEING IT DONE IS BETTER THAN TELLING THEM HOW TO DO IT

   Select consultants for teacher inservice or staff development activities who will demonstrate a technique or method in an actual classroom with students.

9. ENCOURAGE TEACHERS TO VISIT AND SHARE

   A regular schedule of inter - or intra - school visits could be planned with followup sharing sessions.

International Reading Association